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THE WEEK

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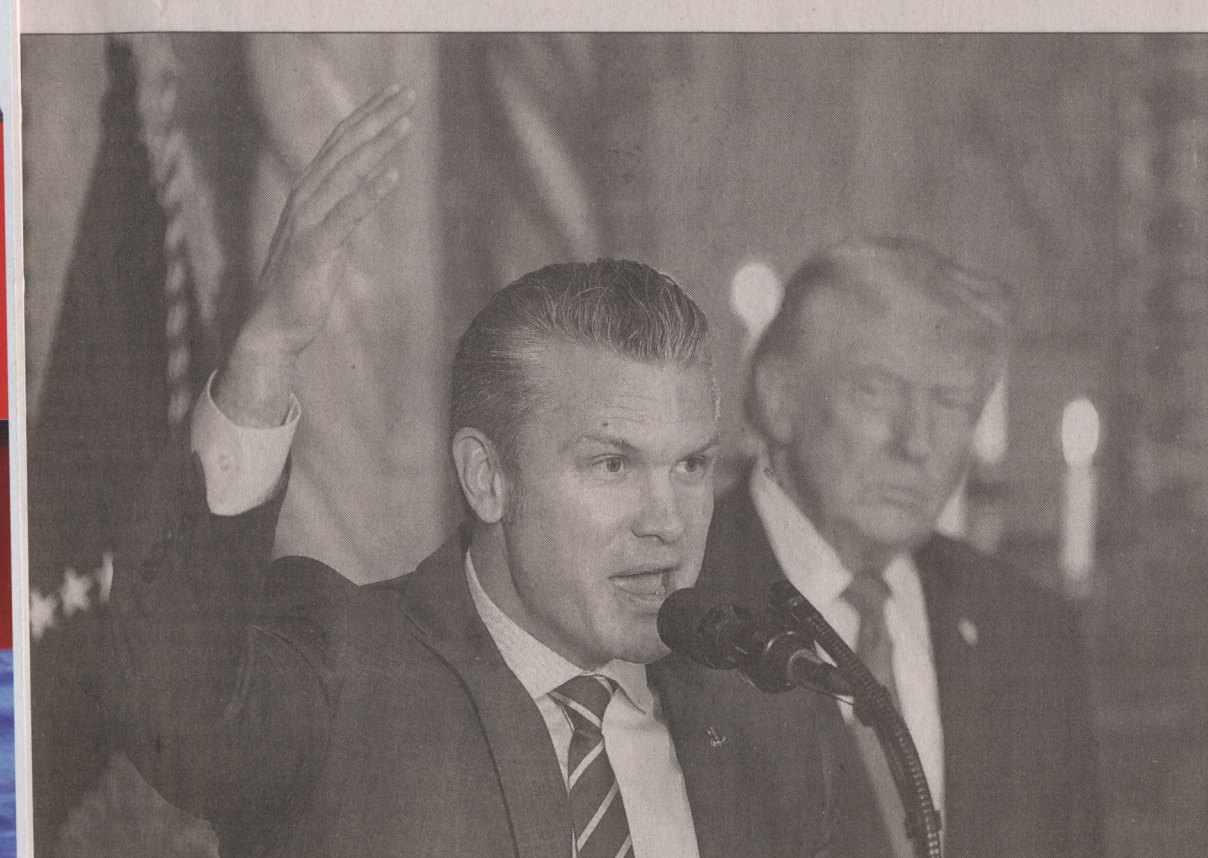
EMBER 12, 2025 VOLUME 25 ISSUE 1265

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YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS



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Although Venezuela's current oil output is modest, the nation sits on the world's largest known oil reserves, offering significant potential access to any future strategic partners. China is currently the largest importer of Venezuelan oil, and at least one tanker subjected to the U.S. blockade has sought protection from Moscow, Maduro's chief military ally.

Addressing the blockade in an exchange with reporters, Trump said he had spoken with top U.S. oil executives about what the Venezuelan market would look like with Maduro no longer in power. And he suggested the U.S. government would keep whatever barrels are seized, hearkening back to Trump's campaign, throughout the 2010s, for the United States to control the oil fields of Iraq as the spoils of its war there.

"We're going to keep it," Trump said last week, of the 1.9 million barrels of Venezu-

A CROWD celebrates Holy Innocents' Day in Caucagua, Miranda state, Venezuela, on Sunday.

weeks at other motives driving his calculus.

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Mamdani era in NYC starts with a pair of events

BY ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE

Zohran Mamdani will become mayor of New York City as the clock ticks over into 2026 — but the celebrations are set to last through New Year's Day.

The Democrat's team is planning two separate swearing-in ceremonies Thursday — a small, private one with his family in an old subway station around midnight, followed by a large event in the afternoon that will include a public block party outside City Hall.

As a new mayor's term begins immediately with the new year, it has been customary for the city's incoming leaders to hold two events. Departing Mayor Eric Adams held his initial swearing-in at Times Square shortly after the famous ball drop, and Adams' predecessor Bill de Blasio took his first oath at home in Brooklyn.

For his part, Mamdani will take his initial oath at the former City Hall subway station in Manhattan — one of the city's original stops on its subterranean transit system, known for its tiled arches and vaulted ceilings.

New York Atty. Gen. Letitia James, a political ally and notable foe of President Trump, will administer the oath of office.

The old City Hall stop was designed as the flagship station of the city's first subway line but was decommissioned in 1945. These days, outside of occasional guided historical tours, locals can usually only catch a glimpse of it by staying on the 6 train after its last stop downtown when it turns around to head north.

In a statement, Mamdani's office said the choice to be sworn in at the station reflected his "commitment to the working people who keep our city running every day."

"When Old City Hall Station first opened in 1904 — one of New York's 28 original subway stations — it was a physical monument to a city that dared to be both beautiful and build great things that would transform working peoples' lives," Mamdani said.

"That ambition need not be a memory confined only to our past, nor must it be isolated only to the tunnels beneath City Hall: it will be the purpose of the administration fortunate enough to serve New Yorkers from the building above," he said.

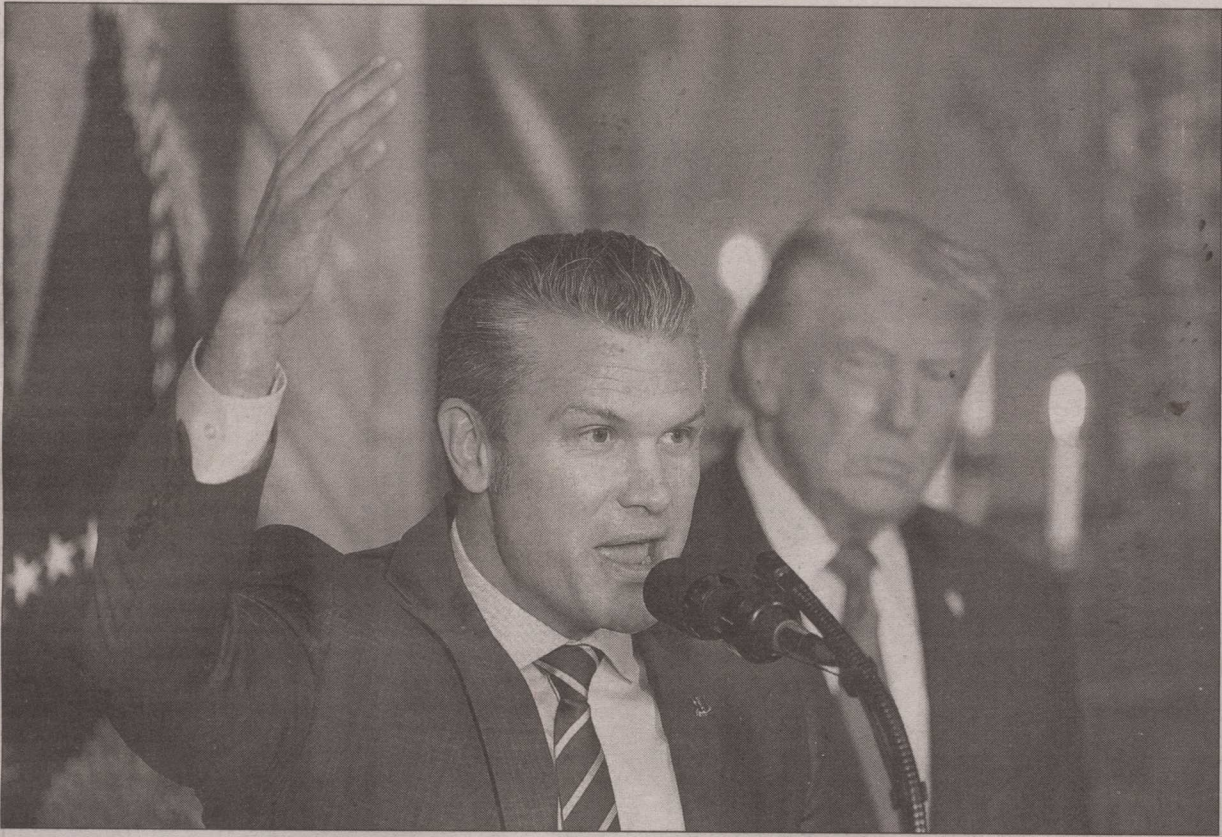
On Thursday afternoon, Mamdani will be sworn in again, this time by U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, one of his political heroes, on the steps of City Hall in a ceremony. It's scheduled to kick off at 1 p.m. with opening remarks from U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, another political ally and a fellow New Yorker.

Mamdani's transition formed an inaugural committee that includes actor John Turturro, playwright Cole Escola and writer Colson Whitehead, as well as advocates, small-business owners and campaign workers who the incoming mayor's office says have "provided perspective, guidance, and cultural sensibility" for the ceremony.

The public swearing-in will be accompanied by a block party along a stretch of Broadway leading up to City Hall. Mamdani's office expects thousands of people to attend and says there will be performances, music and interfaith elements.

Izaguirre writes for the Associated Press.





ALEX BRANDON Associated Press

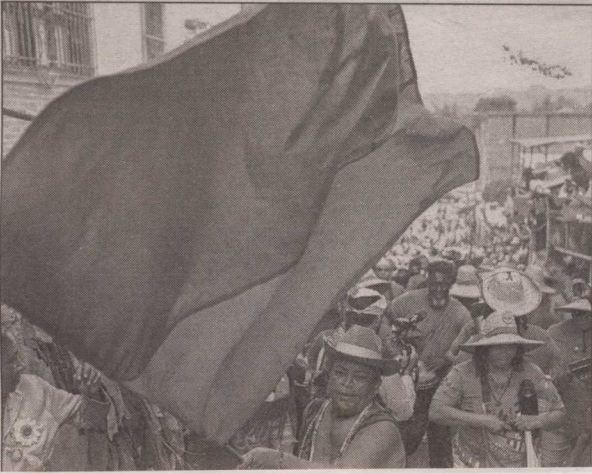
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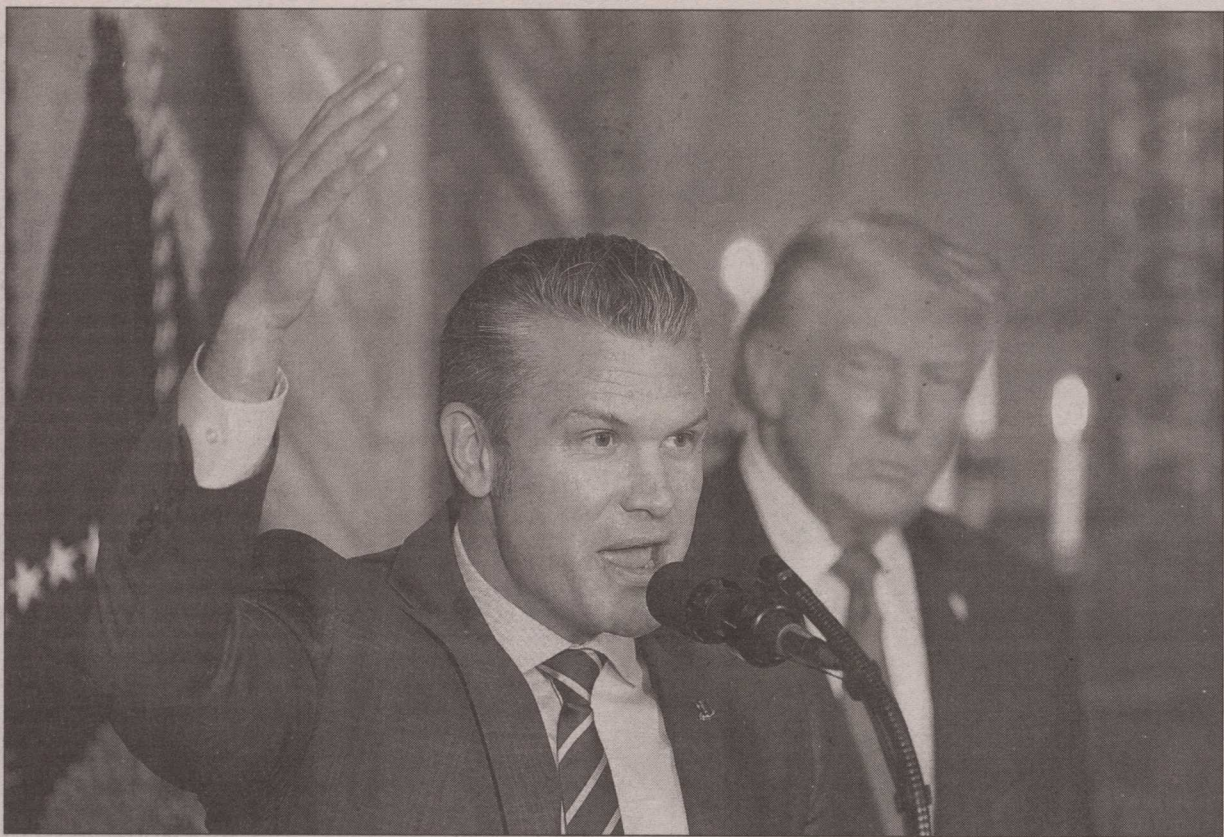
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But Trump has yet to articulate the full scope of those objectives, leaving observers to wonder whether regime change in Venezuela is his true, ultimate aim.

Trump has repeatedly told the media that Maduro's days in power are numbered. The administration refers to him and his regime as an illegitimate narco-state terrorizing American communities. On a bipartisan basis, going back to Trump's first term and throughout the Biden administration, the United States has recognized a democratic opposition in Venezuela as its rightful government.

But a military war on the drug trade would make little sense targeting Venezuela, where only a fraction of illicit narcotics smuggled into the United States originate. Trump has hinted in recent

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Over the last months, the Trump administration slowly raised its pressure campaign on Maduro, first by targeting boats allegedly carrying narcotics and drug smuggling, then by announcing a blockade of Venezuelan oil tankers. Venezuela's oil exports consequently plummeted half over the course of last month.

On Wednesday, Treasury Department issued sanctions

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6 NEWS

Controversy of the Week

'Kill everybody': Did Hegseth order a war crime?

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has earned the unique distinction of being "a war criminal—without a war," said George F. Will in *The Washington Post*. On Sept. 2, as the U.S. military surveilled an alleged drug-smuggling boat in the Caribbean, the Pentagon boss and former Fox News host gave a spoken order to "kill everybody," two sources told the *Post* last week. Soon after, a missile smashed into the vessel. But as the smoke cleared, a drone feed showed two of the boat's 11 crew members "clinging to the wreckage." To comply with Hegseth's order, operation commander Adm. Frank "Mitch" Bradley ordered a second strike; both survivors were killed. To be clear: That attack and the more than 20 subsequent strikes on alleged drug boats were likely already illegal, resting as they do on the White House claim that Venezuelans ferrying cocaine are "narco-terrorists" at war with the U.S. But even if you accept that dubious rationale, the "no quarter" killing of survivors is a war crime "in both American and international law," said Tom Nichols in *The Atlantic*. Democrats and Republicans in Congress have vowed to investigate the attack. But rather than resign in disgrace, Hegseth is using Bradley as a human shield, declaring that he stands by the admiral "and the combat decisions he has made."

Bradley is no scapegoat, said Jed Rubenfeld in *The Free Press*. If the reports are true, he "committed murder," plain and simple. Orders from a superior do not justify war crimes. And Bradley's initial claim, reported by the *Post*, that the survivors were killed to stop them from summoning help won't cut it with a judge. That excuse recalls the defense of Heinz Eck, a German U-boat commander tried after World War II for killing the survivors of a torpedoed merchant ship in 1944. Eck argued the sailors could have given



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away his sub's position; he was executed by firing squad. Hegseth is guilty, too, if he ordered that second strike; five U.S. officials told *The New York Times* he approved only the initial hit.

Hegseth keeps changing his story, said Andrew C. McCarthy in *National Review*. His latest version of events is that "fire and smoke" meant Bradley couldn't see the survivors and that the admiral ordered the second strike only to sink what remained of the boat. This is "plausible," but it's "puzzling" that Hegseth didn't offer this explanation last week. And it's convenient that Hegseth says he'd left the room by the time the second strike was ordered, despite having told Fox News

on Sept. 3 that he watched the entire operation "live." Then there are the multiple statements he's made in recent days that the aim of the Caribbean mission is to "kill narco-terrorists," and his posting on X of an image of children's book character Franklin the turtle shooting at drug traffickers. Is it any wonder so many people suspect he "just might have given an order to kill everybody?"

Hegseth is simply following "the M.O. of his boss," said Nick Catoggio in *The Dispatch*. In Trump's worldview, "you can never be too cruel to an enemy," military or political, but any real-world blowback is always somebody else's fault. Therein lies a flicker of hope. While Hegseth tries to make Bradley his "fall guy," Trump's own uncharacteristic reaction—saying he personally "wouldn't have wanted" a second strike—suggests he may be eyeing Hegseth for the same role. Trump will never surround himself with the proverbial "few good men" to uphold America's military honor. But if this story drags on, Trump's instinct for self-preservation might lead him to dump Hegseth and find "some slightly less bad ones."

Only in America

■ An Oklahoma 7-Eleven worker says she was fired for shooting an attacker who tried to strangle her. Stephanie Dilyard, 25, said she was working the night shift alone when she was attacked by Kenneth Thompson, 59. Reaching for her handgun, Dilyard shot Thompson in the stomach. He survived, but Dilyard was later fired by managers for a "violation of policy." Dilyard has no regrets, saying she "did what I had to do to go home to my kids."

■ IRS agents will have to watch OnlyFans porn to enforce President Trump's tax rules, a source said.

Good week for:

Florida, after the 2025 hurricane season officially ended without any hurricane making landfall on the U.S. mainland. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem credited President Trump's strong leadership, telling him, "You kept the hurricanes away. We appreciate that."

Adaptation, after scientists exploring the ruined Chernobyl nuclear power plant found several new strains of mold that seem to "feed" on gamma radiation much like plants thrive on sunlight. NASA is studying whether the mold could be used to protect astronauts from cosmic rays.

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Grabbing breakfast, after a New Zealand man was arrested for stealing and swallowing a diamond-encrusted Fabergé egg from a jewelry store. Police said the thief is now in custody and has received medical attention.

In other news

FDA to radically tighten rules for vaccine approvals

The Food and Drug Administration's top vaccine regulator said last week that the agency would restrict vaccine approvals after linking the deaths of at least 10 children to Covid shots. In a leaked internal email, Dr. Vinay Prasad said the children "died after and because of receiving" vaccination between 2021 and 2024, but he presented no evidence. Prasad, an ally of Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., said the agency will also review the framework for annual flu shots and whether Americans should get multiple shots at once—long a

St. Paul, Minn.

Pandemic theft:

this week launched a crackdown targeting the diaspora, escalating community tensions.



Walz

nine people have died since President Trump declared Somalia a haven for scanning "garbage" should they come from. *City Journal*, the investigating who went to al-Shabab group in Somalia has the nation's American population of 80,000 people. Gov. Tim Walz, an anti-fraud tax warned against the entire group of same brush."

San Francisco

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Not health fo...

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BEN NIGHTHORSE CAMPBELL

Former senator

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ben Nighthorse Campbell, the former senator and U.S. representative of Colorado known for his passionate advocacy of Native American issues, died Tuesday. He was 92.

Campbell died of natural causes surrounded by his family, his daughter, Shanan Campbell, confirmed to the Associated Press.

Campbell, a Democrat who stunned his party by joining the Republican Party, stood out in Congress as much for his unconventional dress — cowboy boots, bolo ties and ponytail — as his de-

leaders and was for the GOP.

"I get hampered," he said. "I'm always will just don't think things to all which party you

Considered Senate term, supporters who the race in 2004.

"I thought it wasn't," said when I was lying the hospital looking doctors' faces, I really need to do after I've been home? I have two

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■ IRS agents will have to watch OnlyFans porn to enforce President Trump's "no tax on tips" policy. As codified in law, the tax break excludes tips for "pornographic activity," which agents must distinguish from titillating content when processing returns—a tricky task, said OnlyFans creator Macy Hilt, 24. While much of her \$2 million annual income comes from "fully explicit" content, said Hilt, "I've made a lot of money, and a lot of tips, based off just a foot picture."

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Ground crews, after a British school asked the public to help find Bradford Bear, a stuffed animal that tumbled to Earth after being launched into the stratosphere on a weather balloon by students. Teacher Ellie Robinson said the students have been reassured that Bradford "is very brave and resourceful."

Screen-time limits, after President Trump went on a late-night social media spree, posting or reposting about once a minute for a total of 158 posts in a matter of hours. Among the posts were claims that President Biden's executive orders were mostly drafted by Michelle Obama and a decree that "Christmas is officially GREAT again!"

In other news

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St. Paul, Minn.

Pandemic theft: The Trump administration this week launched an immigration crackdown targeting Minnesota's Somali diaspora, escalating pressure on a community already facing scrutiny over a sweeping fraud scandal.



Walz

Federal prosecutors have charged 86 people, largely of Somali ancestry, with stealing more than \$1 billion from the state's social services system—including from programs to feed children during the pandemic. Fifty-nine people have been convicted so far. President Trump said Minnesota was a haven for scammers and that Somali "garbage" should be sent "back to where they came from." Citing claims from *City Journal*, the administration is also investigating whether stolen funds went to al-Shabab, a terrorist group in Somalia. Minnesota has the nation's largest Somali American population, about 80,000 people. Democratic Gov. Tim Walz has created an anti-fraud task force but warned against painting "an entire group of people with that same brush."

San Francisco

Ultra-processed: San Francisco became the first government to sue ultra-processed food manufacturers, arguing the city is bearing the cost of treating medical problems arising from unhealthy diets.



Not health food

San Francisco's attorney, David Chiu, filed a lawsuit in the city's Superior Court this week against 10 companies, including Kraft and Coca-Cola, alleging that they have "engineered a public health crisis." The suit compares the companies to tobacco firms and seeks to prevent them from using deceptive marketing. It also asks for unspecified damages to offset health-care costs. Loosely defined as foods made from ingredients not found in home kitchens, ultra-processed items constitute 70% of the U.S. food supply and have been linked to heart disease and diabetes. California this year became the first state to ban them from school meals, putting the liberal state in an uneasy alliance with Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who said the foods are "driving our chronic disease epidemic."

Newark, N.J.

Unlawful appointment: A federal appeals court this week ruled that Alina Habba—President Trump's former personal attorney—is serving unlawfully as the acting U.S. attorney in New Jersey, likely setting up a Supreme Court showdown that could determine the president's power to appoint favored prosecutors. Habba was first nominated by Trump in March to a 120-day interim term as the state's top federal prosecutor even though she had no prosecutorial or criminal law experience. When her term was set to expire this summer, the district's judges chose her deputy to lead the office. The Trump administration then fired the deputy, and Attorney General Pam Bondi appointed Habba as a "special attorney" in order to put her back in charge. The appeals court said the maneuver was unconstitutional, as it would effectively permit "anyone to fill the U.S. attorney role indefinitely."

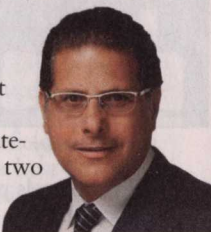


Indianapolis

Redistricting redux: Facing a deluge of threats, Indiana Republicans moved forward this week with a redistricting plan after first rejecting President Trump's call to redraw the state's congressional map to benefit their party. At least 11 state Republicans have been targeted with swatting attacks or death threats after Trump complained they weren't helping to protect the GOP's slim House majority in next year's midterms. Indiana's GOP-led House has introduced a map that could net Republicans two extra seats, and which Democrats call a racial gerrymander. Republican state Sens. Jean Leising and Mike Bohacek received bomb threats after saying they remained opposed. Bohacek has a daughter with Down syndrome and said he would vote against the map because Trump uses slurs that demean people with intellectual disabilities. "Words have consequences," he said. In Florida, Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis said he would call a special legislative session on redistricting next spring.

Nassau County, New York

Fraudster freed: President Trump commuted the 7-year sentence of a private-equity executive less than two weeks after he entered prison for orchestrating a \$1.6 billion Ponzi-like scheme with thousands of victims. A federal jury last year found David Gentile and his business partner, Jeffry Schneider, guilty on all counts, including securities fraud and conspiracy. Their company, GPB Capital, pitched investors with promises of 8% returns, but instead dipped into investor funds to make monthly payouts and lavish purchases, like a \$355,000 Ferrari sports car and a private jet. The scheme's victims included farmers, nurses, and teachers. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Gentile was a victim of the "weaponization" of justice under former president Joe Biden. Trump this week also pardoned Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-Texas), who was charged in 2024 with accepting \$600,000 in bribes from two foreign entities. Trump said Cuellar was punished by Biden for speaking out against his immigration policies.



Gentile

Washington, D.C.

Abortion case: The Supreme Court appeared poised this week to side with a group of New Jersey anti-abortion pregnancy centers that are challenging an order to hand over donor information. New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin subpoenaed First Choice Women's Resource Centers, a collection of five "crisis pregnancy centers," in 2023, requesting details about donors. The state argued that the information would only have been used to ask donors whether they had been deceived about First Choice's services. Such centers have been on the rise nationwide and have drawn criticism for looking deceptively like abortion clinics, when instead they exist to steer women toward having babies. But First Choice argued that Platkin's order violated freedom of speech and association. Several of the justices seemed to agree. Chief Justice John Roberts feared the subpoena could deter donors, while Justice Clarence Thomas dismissed the subpoena as a "burdensome" way to check if a group "has a confusing website."



U.S. Supreme Court